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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0876
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 3364
RUCNTXD/AMEMBASSY MAJURO PRIORITY 0107
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 4116
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY 0217
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5692
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2480
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5192
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2802
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3311
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 1320
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002198

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/ANP, DRL, DRL/AWH
NSC FOR E.PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2018

TAGS: PGOV PINS PHUM ID

SUBJECT: PAPUA -- SENSITIVE DATE PASSES WITHOUT MAJOR
INCIDENT

REF: JAKARTA 1929

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Classified By: A/Pol/C Stanley Harsha, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: December 1--a sensitive date in Indonesia's restive eastern provinces of Papua and West Papua--passed without serious incident. Activist groups organized large rallies at major Papuan cities, all of which remained peaceful. Security forces maintained a visible but restrained presence. However, the December 3 arrest of a Papuan activist in connection with earlier demonstrations underscores the still-volatile atmosphere in the area. END SUMMARY.

LARGE, PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS

¶2. (SBU) Papuan groups organized large rallies across Papua and West Papua provinces to mark December 1--the date many Papuans view as "independence day." (Note: On December 1, 1961 the Dutch colonial administration first allowed Papuans to fly the Morning Star flag and use other symbols of sovereignty. Indonesian authorities have banned the flag and other symbols because of their separatist connotations.)

¶3. (SBU) The largest demonstration came in Sentani, a suburb of Papuan provincial capital Jayapura. Nearly 10,000 people held a prayer vigil at the grave of murdered pro-independence leader Theys Eluay. (Note: Eluay was murdered in November 2001. An Indonesian court convicted several junior military personnel of the crime.) Contacts reported that many participants at the vigil carried small Morning Star flags. Security forces maintained a heavy presence but no serious incidents were reported.

¶4. (SBU) Other demonstrations occurred across the two provinces. In Nabire, a town in central Papua, several thousand people gathered for a pro-independence rally outside the district government headquarters. In Manokwari, the capital of West Papua province, approximately 2,000 people demonstrated at the provincial parliament. Police repeatedly

struck one protester and attempted to confiscate a flag he carried, according to reports.

¶ 15. (C) On the whole, however, security forces appeared to act with restraint. Papua police chief F.X. Bagus Ekodanto warned the public not to succumb to "provocations" and to avoid displaying any banned symbols. He also offered assurances that police would not interfere with rallies that were lawful and peaceful. Contacts in Jayapura told us the situation was tense, with a heavy presence of police and military throughout the city. However, they did not report any violence or other serious incidents.

AN INFLAMMATORY DECLARATION

¶ 16. (C) A pro-independence group--the Papuan Presidium Council (PDP)--distributed copies of an independence declaration at many of these rallies. (Note: The PDP consists of Papuan traditional and tribal leaders. The extent of the group's popular support remains unclear. Murdered activist Eluay had served as its chairman.) The declaration called on foreign governments and the United Nations to recognize Papua's independence. The PDP also called for the closure of multinational corporations operating in the region, including BP and U.S. mining giant Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold. Several contacts told us that the PDP distributed the declaration in the hope of provoking a harsh security force response. This stratagem does not appear to have succeeded.

ARREST PRESAGES CONTINUED TENSIONS

¶ 17. (C) The December 3 arrest of Buchtar Tabuni, a Papuan
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activist, generated tension. Police arrested Tabuni for organizing several demonstrations in mid-November (see reftel). (Note: Those demonstrations were organized to mark a declaration by several British parliamentarians in support of Papuan self-determination.) Police had had a warrant for Tabuni's arrest in late November but had delayed acting on it until after December 1 was past. Following the arrest, a large crowd gathered outside Jayapura police headquarters, where Tabuni was being held. The situation remained peaceful but tense. Neles Tebay, an official of the Jayapura Catholic Diocese, told poloff that Tabuni's arrest would likely lead to further demonstrations.

HUME